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## **BMA CELEBRATES EDGAR ALLAN POE'S BICENTENNIAL WITH SPOOKY ART AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

BALTIMORE, MD (August 4, 2009)—In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth, The Baltimore Museum of Art presents a dramatic exhibition of prints, drawings and illustrated books inspired by the master of the macabre. **Edgar Allan Poe: A Baltimore Icon**, on view October 4, 2009-January 17, 2010, features the works of renowned French artists Paul Gauguin, Édouard Manet, and Odilon Redon, as well as surrealist René Magritte and abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell all paying tribute to Poe's genius. Curated by BMA Director Doreen Bolger, the exhibition includes 35 prints, five drawings, and more than 40 illustrated books drawn primarily from the BMA's world-renowned collection of works on paper and supplemented with important loans from the Art Institute of Chicago, Dedalus Foundation, The Johns Hopkins University Libraries, and Enoch Pratt Free Libraries.

During the late 19th century translations of Poe's horrifying tales by French writers Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé brought the American writer fame and a following throughout Europe. Many artists living in France became fascinated by his suspenseful storytelling—so much so that they turned their spectacular talents to illustrating the writer's famous characters. Henri Matisse and Felix Vallotton are among the artists that created portraits of Poe, as well as images of Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

"The French artists were as much drawn to Poe's personality as his writing," said Bolger. "They saw him as a kindred spirit; a visionary who explored a frightening side of life with subjects who had unbalanced minds. Poe captured people's deepest fears—both of what they feared about themselves and what they feared about others. He wrote for those of us who still look under our beds before we sleep."

In addition to a selection of portraits of Poe, the exhibition highlights the following artistic and literary themes:

**Love and Loss** highlights Poe's melancholic poem, "The Raven," with works by Manet, Redon, and other artists who embraced Poe's epic expression of sorrow with images of the raven and the narrator's beloved Lenore set amidst gloomy shadows and haunted figures.

**Fear and Terror** is Poe's most broadly explored theme. He captured people's deepest fears—both what they fear about themselves and what they fear about others. Vivid examples are Alphonse Legros' and Alfred Kubin's sinister prints and illustrations for *The Pit and the Pendulum*, Poe's excruciating tale of torture set during the Spanish Inquisition. Arthur Rackham and Redon highlighted other thrillers such as *Descent into the Maelstrom* and Poe's onomatopoeic poem "The Bells." Motherwell captured the terrifying spirit of Poe's work with large-scale expressionist prints.

**Madness and Obsession** focuses on Poe's depictions of insanity. *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Black Cat*, and *Berenice* each culminate in horrific acts of violence caused by the narrator's inexplicable fixations. Ominous illustrations of eyes, cats, and the victims of murderous obsessions by Legros, Redon, and Rackham enrich Poe's dark stories.

The exhibition is generously supported by CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, The Dedalus Foundation, Kelly & Associates Insurance Group, Inc., Hogan & Hartson LLP, and the International Fine Print Dealers Association.

### **Baltimore Inspired by Poe**

The BMA has partnered with the community arts organization Art on Purpose to present *Baltimore Inspired by Poe*, an exhibition of drawings, collages, and paintings created by Baltimore artists and residents who participated in workshops at four Enoch Pratt Free Library branches earlier this year. Guided by artist/instructors Andy Cook, Tonya Gregg, Valeska Populoh, and Marty Weishaar, participants drew inspiration from Poe's writings and their own personal experiences. *Baltimore Inspired by Poe* is on view concurrently with the BMA's exhibition, October 4, 2009 – January 17, 2010.

### **Edgar Allan Poe biography**

Born to Elizabeth Arnold Poe and David Poe on January 19, 1809, Poe's father abandoned the family and his mother's untimely death in 1811 left Edgar in the care of a wealthy English merchant, John Allan, and his wife. Allan provided for Poe's education until he dropped out of the University of Virginia in 1827 due to his debts from gambling. Poe enlisted in the army and wrote his first collection of poetry before his debts once again caught up with him. He lived in Baltimore with his aunt between 1831 and 1835 and married his 13-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm, in 1836. During this time, Poe began writing prose fiction and expanded his editorial and publishing career with increased success. Credited with creating the detective story and perfecting the psychological thriller, Poe utilized satire and irony and his work was structured and calculated. In 1845, Poe published his renowned poem, "The Raven." The next year, the death of his young wife amplified his tendency towards alcoholism. Little is known of the downward spiral of his last years. Poe was discovered unconscious on a Baltimore street on October 3, 1849, and after falling into delirium, died mysteriously on October 7 in a Baltimore hospital.

### **Nevermore 2009**

Baltimore is celebrating the life and works of Edgar Allan Poe with the yearlong citywide festival, *Nevermore 2009*. Continuing through January 2010, Baltimore invites you to attend lectures, wine tastings, art exhibitions, and special tours at venues around the city—all in honor of 200th anniversary of Poe's birthday. Don't miss *An Evening with Poe* with Baltimore Theatre Project beginning September 21, Viewings of Poe's Body at the Edgar Allan Poe House on October 7, Poe's Funeral Service at Westminster Hall on October 11, and much more. For more information and a complete list of events, visit [nevermore2009.com](http://nevermore2009.com).

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### **THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914, the BMA's outstanding collection encompasses 90,000 works of art, including the largest and most significant holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world, as well as masterpieces by Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, and Vincent van Gogh. An expanding collection of contemporary art features iconic post-1960 works by Andy Warhol and Sol LeWitt, as well as exciting acquisitions by artists such as Kara Walker and Olafur Eliasson. The BMA is also recognized for an internationally acclaimed collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15th-century to the present; grand European painting and sculpture from Old Masters to the 19th-century; distinguished American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; one of the most important African collections in the country, and notable examples of Asian, ancient American, and Pacific Islands art.

### **VISITOR INFORMATION**

General admission to the BMA is free; special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. (except major holidays). The Museum is closed Mondays, Tuesdays, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

**NOTE: BEGINNING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009, THE BMA WILL BEGIN OPENING WEEKDAYS (WEDNESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY) AT 10 A.M. WEEKEND HOURS WILL REMAIN THE SAME.**